

Source Tasmania?

If you've read Sarah's article (facing page) in this exciting expanded edition of the Source Newsletter, you will know there is a growing buzz around "food security" in Tasmania. In fact our state is now leading the nation in recognising the importance of not just providing adequate nutrition for all citizens, but as much as possible, doing so from local sources.

If you live in Sandy Bay, Tarooma or South Hobart, the Source Community Wholefoods Co-op now provides a relatively convenient and affordable means for you to access good quality, nutritious and sustainable food. For many people, such as uni students, who are potentially food insecure, this development increases their "food security". However, I believe there is also a need (and opportunity) to extend the reach of this service beyond the relative affluence of the Co-op's current location into some of Hobart's (and potentially Tasmania's) more distant locations. If such a program is to be successful over the longer term however, it needs to generate enough income that it can cover operating expenses without the need to continually rely on government or donor support. That is, it needs to be a self supporting

'social enterprise'.

With this end in mind, I recently requested a small grant from the Tasmanian Food Security Fund, to undertake a study exploring the commercial and logistical feasibility of expanding the reach of the Source co-op in conjunction with two third party organisations; The Smith Family and the Midlands Initiative for Local enterprise (MiLE). This feasibility study (which is being auspiced by my employer The Australian Innovation Research Centre) will explore two modes of service extension, both of which would involve some level of online ordering and delivery of products to community drop off points.

The first option is the 'gently gently' option and would see a minimal investment in the current Source site, such that we could pack perhaps 100 boxes a week on site, a portion of these boxes would then be conveyed to outlying member groups in Bridgewater and Oatlands. Ideally boxes would be custom packed and include any item currently sold by the co-op. Obviously space is tight in the building though, and packing even 100 boxes on site will need creative thinking. Given we now have around 800 members however, offering any fewer, in my opinion, would be too

exclusionary. Delivery to outlying drop off points, would be carried out by volunteers in those areas.

The second option, which I'm referring to as "The Full Monty", would see significant investment in an off-site storage and distribution facility suitable for storing, packing and delivering 500-1500 boxes per week. The boxes would be delivered to designated community drop off points throughout the state. While this option is certainly ambitious, it is I think feasible given the current funding environment and support for similar organisations (like www.foodconnect.com) in other locations. This study is being carried out in conjunction with the Source board as well as the aforementioned partner organisations. While I believe it has the potential to paint an exciting future direction for Source, actually implementing its recommendations will be a matter for the Source board as well as you, the members of the Source cooperative, to consider.

If you would like to discuss this study with me, please contact me via email:

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- By Ben Wills
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